

# Customer Feedback Annual Report

## Children's Services

### 2022/23

Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council  
August 2023



# 1. Introduction

The report covers Children's Services formal feedback and representations for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The report details the comments, compliments and complaints formally recorded by Shropshire Council. The annual report is designed as a public document, and in addition to annual reporting, regular internal reporting is carried out. This regular monitoring of formal feedback enables any issues to be addressed early and focuses attention on ongoing improvement.

The Children's Act 1989 and NHS and the Community Care Act 1990 require all local authorities with social services responsibilities in England and Wales to have a complaints procedure. 'Getting the Best from Complaints' provides guidance for local authorities on implementing the Children's Act. This report is produced in line with national guidance.

Statutory complaints relate to the provision of social care and are handled in line with the national regulations referred to above. These statutory complaints follow the Council's Statutory Complaints Procedure for children's services, the key stages of which are set out in section 2 of this report: stage 1 - local resolution; stage 2 – investigation; stage 3 - review panel and section 4 - referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Few complaints progress through multiple stages of the procedure, and Shropshire Council aims to provide thorough investigations and responses at stage 1 and 2.

The remainder of complaints for Children's Services fall under the Council's corporate complaints procedure, for example these may be complaints about educational improvement services, a support service or administrative process rather than social care. Corporate complaints are investigated at stage 1, reviewed at stage 2 and customers may choose to progress their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as a final stage. You can find out more in the Council's Annual Corporate Customer Feedback Report.

You can give us your views in several different ways. Please use the one that suits you best. If you are a child you can make the complaint yourself, request an advocate or ask an adult you trust to make a complaint on your behalf. You can:

- Speak to a member of staff
- Telephone 01743 256188
- Email: [customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)
- Fill in the form on the Council's website: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback>

## Complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint. A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided. Family members and advocates may also make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers. We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

## Compliment

Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say 'thank you' to our teams and staff members too.

## Comment

Feedback about a service could be:

- a suggestion to improve it.
- a question as to whether something could be done differently.
- an idea for delivering a service differently.

## 2. The Children's Complaints Process (Statutory)

### Feedback Received

Shropshire Council encourages children, parents, carers and others to give feedback and highlight any concerns so that they may be addressed as quickly as possible. Children can speak to someone they trust such as a social worker, teacher or other adult. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.

**Telephone:** 0345 678 9000

**Email:** [customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/children-and-young-peoples-complaints/>

**Online:** Log into the My Shropshire portal



### Acknowledgment

Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.



### STAGE 1

The Statutory Complaints Officer or a colleague will contact the appropriate team manager within Children's Services and ask them to investigate the complaint. The complainant will be provided with a written response within 10 days for statutory complaints (sometimes we may have to ask for longer if the issues are more complex and may need 20 working days to complete the investigation). If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint response, they may request to go to stage 2.



### STAGE 2 - Review

If a complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, and the complainant or their representative remains dissatisfied with the investigation or response, an external Independent Investigating Officer and an external Independent Person are commissioned by Children's Services to further investigate the complaint.

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will aim to produce a report within 25 working days. However, if the case is complex, they can have a maximum of 65 days in which to produce their reports. Once the reports have been finalised, they are sent to the adjudication officer (usually the Head of the Service) who will, after careful consideration of the reports, provide the complainant with a written response to the complaint.



### STAGE 3 - Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision/outcome following the independent investigation, they can ask to have their complaint reviewed by a Complaints Review Panel. The Complaints Review Panel is made up of three external people who will review the complaint, but they will not reinvestigate or consider new complaints. The complainant can attend the panel meeting if they choose to and can bring a friend or someone they can trust.



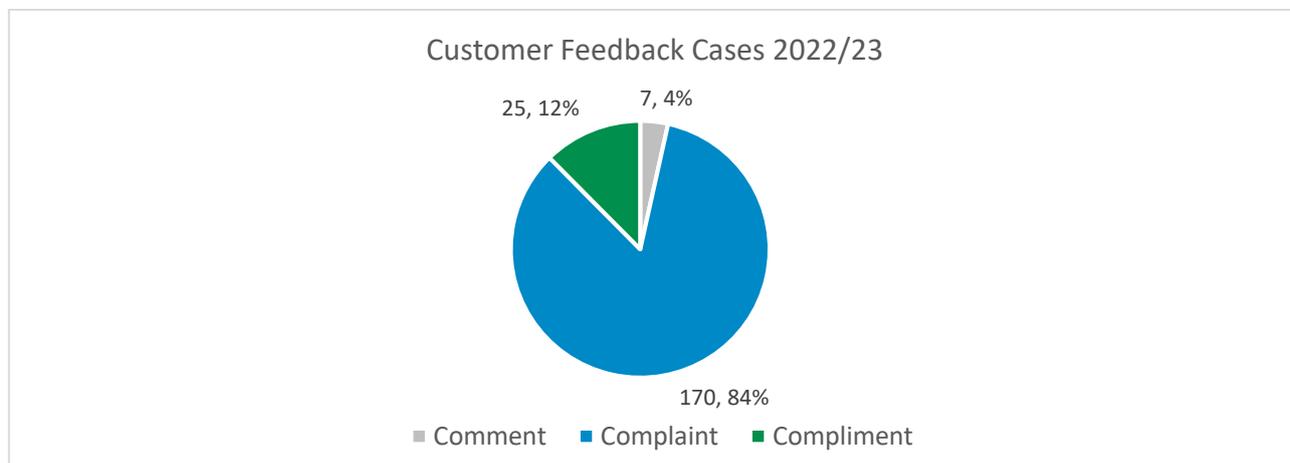
**Ombudsman** If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The Council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices to be collated, catalogued and returned to the LGO. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman after stage 2.

The Shropshire Council Annual Customer feedback report includes a similar diagram to outline the corporate complaints process: stage 1 - investigation, stage 2 – review, final stage - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

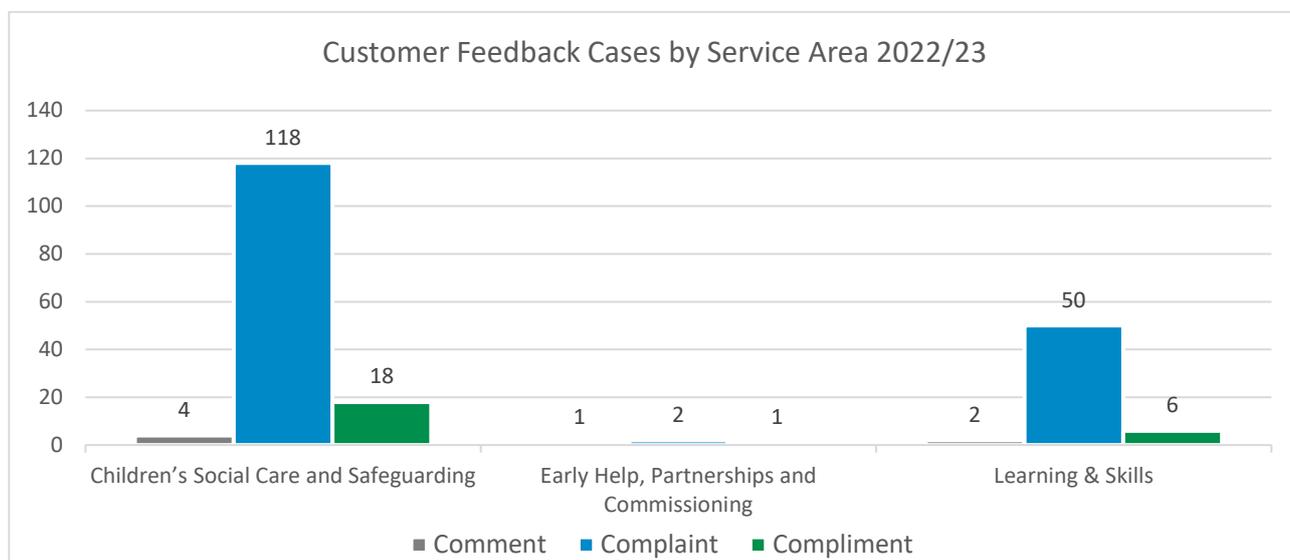
### 3. Customer Feedback 2022/23

In 2022/23 there were 202 cases of feedback recorded for Children’s Services. There were:

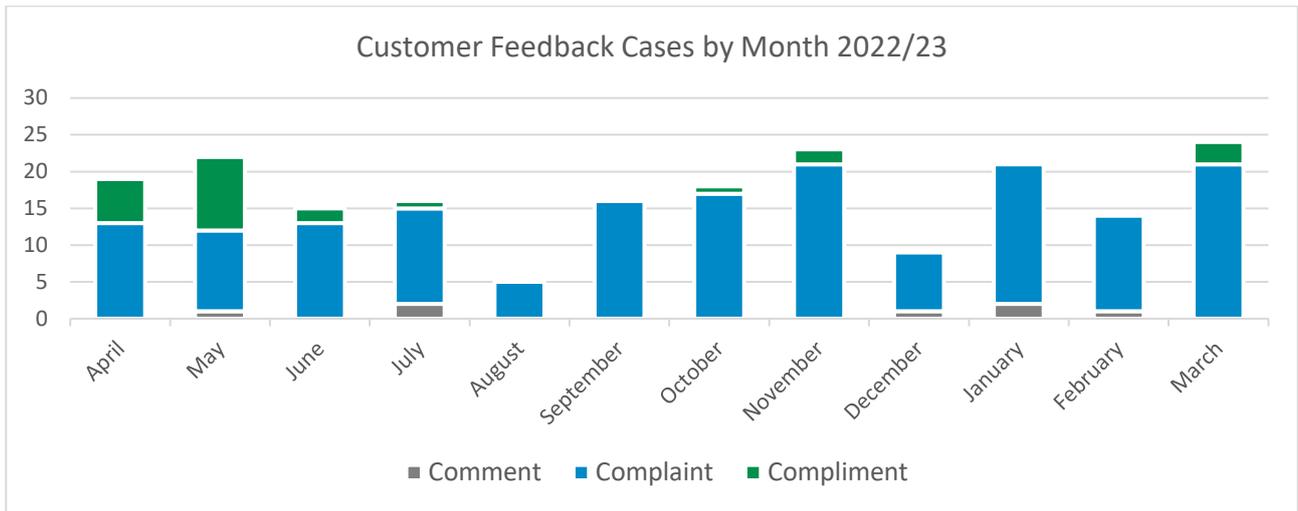
- 25 compliments
- 7 comments or other types of enquiry
- 170 complaint cases



The chart below illustrates how this feedback was spread across service areas. The chart shows that children’s social care and safeguarding, as the largest area of service provision, receives more feedback.



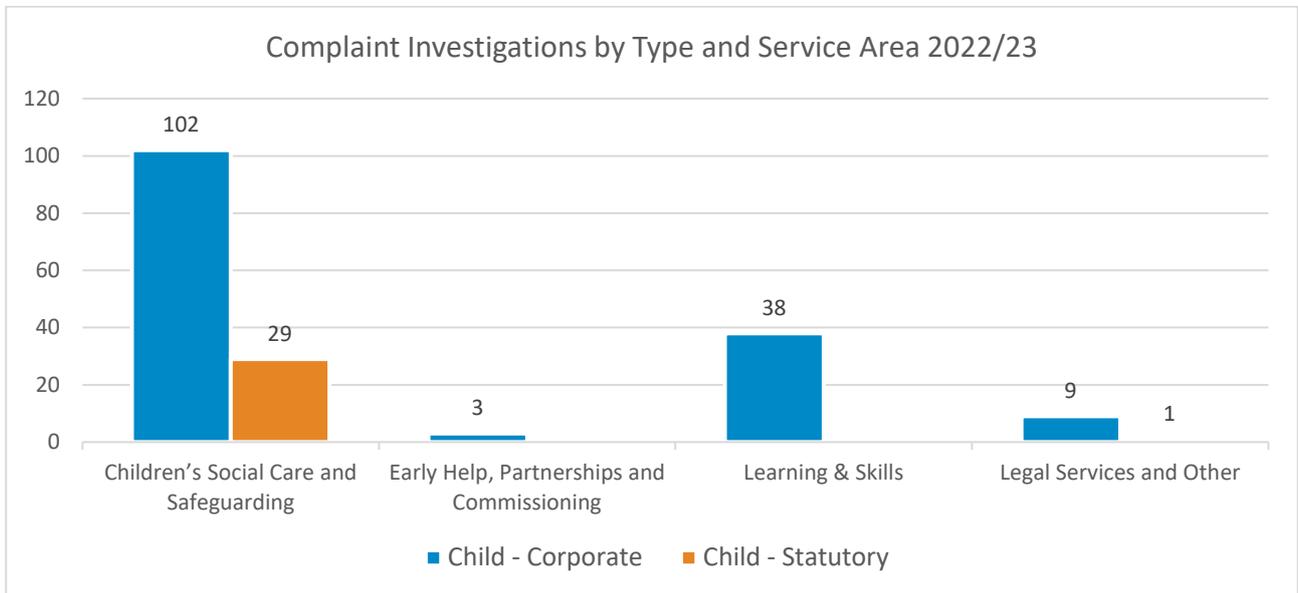
The average number of customer feedback responses recorded per month during 2022/23 was 12 (lower volumes than in previous years). March, November and May saw higher than average cases of feedback. August and December were the months with the least feedback (possibly linked to peak holiday periods). Monthly feedback volumes were greater in quarter 1 and 4 (quarter 4 is often the quarter with the greatest volumes of feedback). This pattern is usual and also seen in previous years.



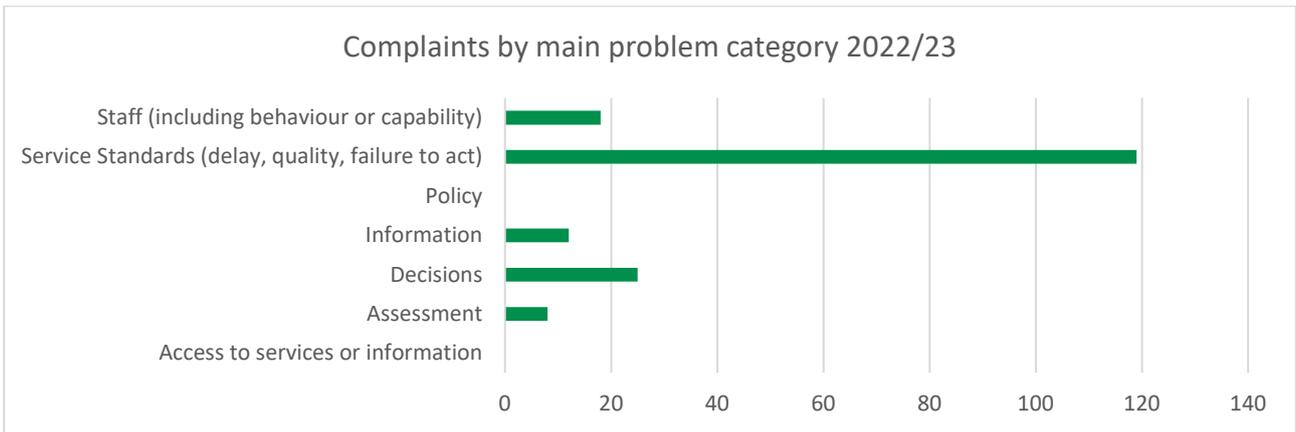
Most customer feedback recorded takes the form of complaints rather than comments or compliments (this may be due to recording practice, with staff members less likely to more formally report a compliment). Of all the customer feedback recorded, 84% of cases were complaints.

Complaints are considered in more detail at the investigation stage and the data we use to consider performance is based on information captured within complaint investigations. There were 170 complaint cases and 180 complaint investigations (a small number of complaints were withdrawn or closed prior to investigation and other cases covered multiple teams/services so resulted in more than one investigation).

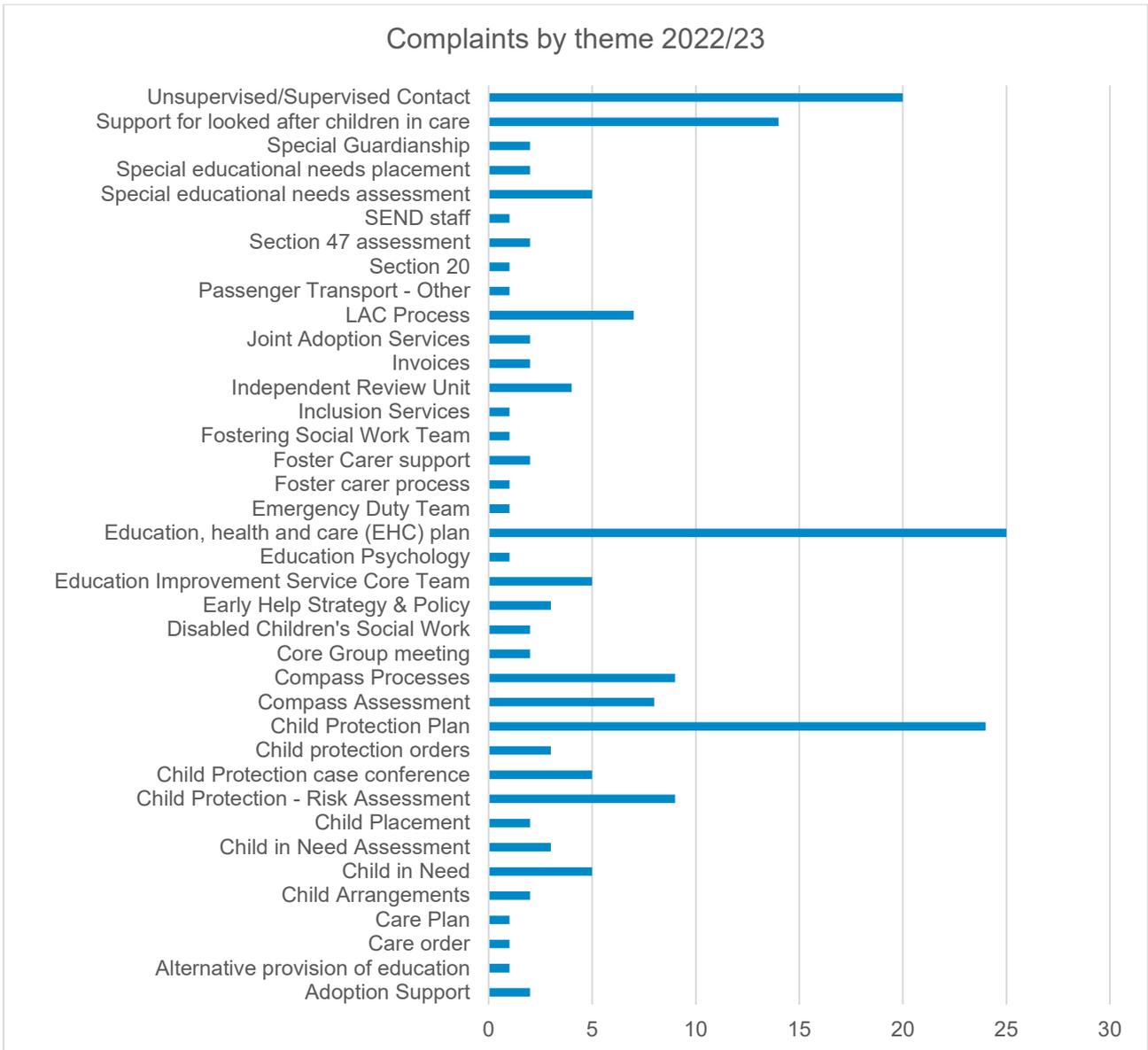
Of the 180 complaint investigations carried out within the year, 152 were corporate cases (84% of all complaints investigations) and 30 were statutory complaints (17%). The process on page 3 highlights the statutory complaints process and timescales for children’s services.



The main problem category for complaints received during 2022/23 were concerns relating to service standards, this includes sub-categories covering poor quality of work/service, failure to provide a service/take action, communication (failure/poor), and concerns over inappropriate/incorrect action. There weren’t any complaints related to policy or access to services or information during the year, and very few complaints related to assessment. This suggests good performance in these areas.

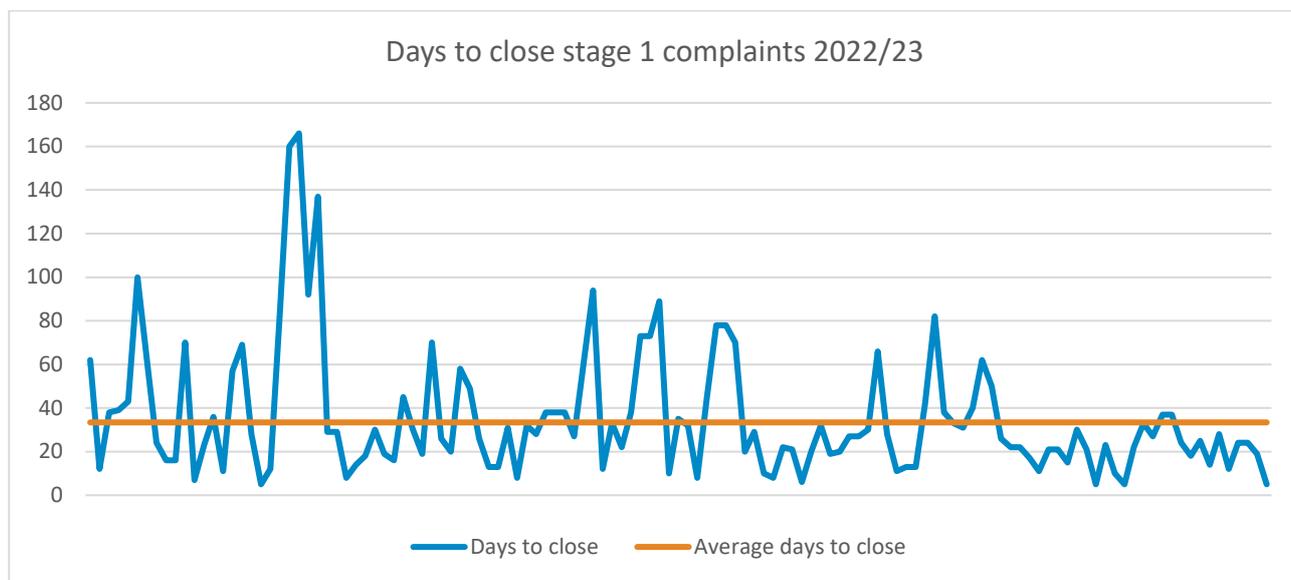


In addition to 'problem category' recording, work also takes place to try and determine themes within complaints. These themes can support proactive work to address concerns early and try to minimise numbers of complaints on similar topics. There are a large number of different themes due to the huge range of different services offered by Children's Services. The chart below displays the themes recorded for Children's Services complaints in 2022/23 with more common themes including Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, Child Protection Plans, unsupervised/supervised contact and support for looked after children in care.



The data highlights that there are repeat complainants making regular complaints and remaining in touch with Shropshire Council over long periods of time. There can be challenges managing these cases when customers have been responded to but remain persistent on the same/similar issues. 28 of the complaints were made by customers with more than one complaint or comment for investigation. 5 of the complainants required 4 or more complaint or comment for action investigations during the year.

During 2022/23 Children’s Services took an average of 33.4 days to close all stage 1 complaints. Corporate complaints took an average of 35 days to close (beyond the 30 working days timescale). Statutory complaints took an average of 26 days to close suggesting that too many cases extended beyond the initial 10 working days timescale. Over the last year, days to close performance has been an area of focus within regular performance monitoring. Performance will continue to be monitored.



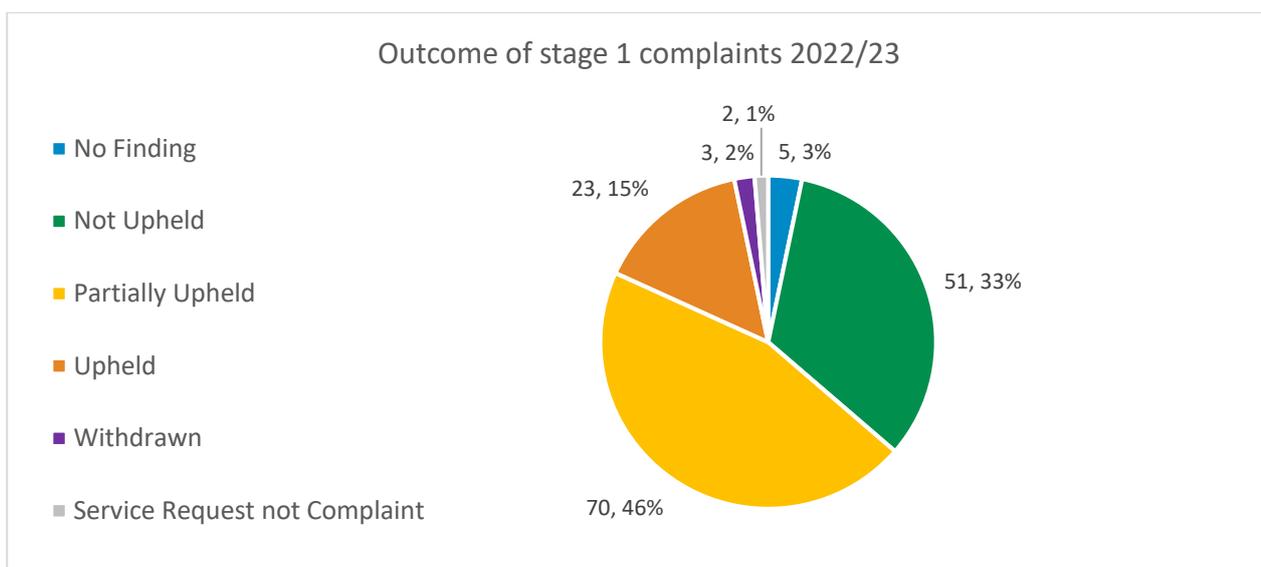
The analysis of complaints by team highlights that complaints are largely spread across teams (as are compliments) but some teams/ services (perhaps those with more complex services and policy) do see more complaints, including the SEND Support Services - SEND Team, Assessment Teams (1 and 2), Looked After Children (LAC) Permanency Teams (more for team 2 than team 1) and Children’s Case Management North West. It has been an ongoing pattern within internal performance monitoring to see more complaints for the north of the county (for children’s case management social work) compared to the south. The chart on the following page highlights how the volumes of complaints are spread across teams and services. Other than the SEND complaints, there are not significantly higher complaint numbers for services and the overall pattern is to see complaints spread across teams.

### Complaints by team or service 2022/23



In addition to numbers of cases and time to respond, it is very important to consider the outcome of the complaints made. Of the 154 complaint investigations closed within the year 15% were upheld, 46% were partially upheld and 33% were not upheld. Other complaints were withdrawn or resulted in no recorded outcome. This performance is similar to previous years.

### Outcome of stage 1 complaints 2022/23



Shropshire Council's data shows that during 2022/23 there were 28 complaints relating to looked after children. During the year 3 complaints were made by children themselves.

In addition to understanding the outcome of stage 1 complaints it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond stage 1. During 2022/23 few complaint cases progressed beyond stage 1. In total 13 progressed beyond stage 1 within the year. 4 cases were raised with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman within the year and 9 cases progressed to stage 2. Overall, more cases progressed beyond stage 1 compared to previous years. A few cases had to be escalated to stage 2 because the complaint was overdue at stage 1. This is being closely monitored and actively addressed by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's report for 2022/23 considers complaints referred to the Ombudsman within the year (so this will include complaints referred to Shropshire Council in the previous year). The Ombudsman received 60 cases and decided on 61. Of the 61 decided, 11 were for Education and Children's Services. Of those, 5 were upheld, 4 were closed after initial enquiries and 2 were referred back to Shropshire Council for local resolution.

The Ombudsman has expressed concerns at the national level about the pressures on complaint handling functions in councils expressing concerns for the third year in a row. Over recent months (including after year end) the Ombudsman has highlighted concerns over the time taken to investigate and respond to children's statutory complaints. This will need to be a priority for the year ahead (see recommendations).

## 4. Annual Comparisons

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p><b>Number of compliments – reduction in numbers</b></p> <p>In the last financial year (2022/23) Shropshire Council received 25 compliments for Children’s Services. This marks a reduction compared to the previous year and numbers suggest an ongoing downward trend. Compliments were greater in 2020/21 overall due to the recognition public services gained in their response to the pandemic.</p>	46	39	25
	Performance has dropped compared to previous years with fewer compliments recorded for 2022/23.		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p><b>Number of complaint investigations – increased</b></p> <p>The number of complaint investigations for Children’s Services has increased with 180 in 2022/23 compared to 144 in 2021/22 and 152 in 2020/21. Numbers will continue to be monitored regularly, through the year and through quarterly reporting.</p>	152	144	180
	Children’s Services have seen an increase in the number of complaint investigations.		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p><b>Days to close – increased</b></p> <p>The average number of working days Children’s Services took to respond to stage 1 complaints in 2022/23 was 33.4 days. This is a significant increase on last year but the same as 2020/21 (the pandemic year). Complaints investigators increasingly report concerns about their ability to meet complaint timescales as a result of workload and service pressures. In-year reporting will continue to monitor this as a priority measure.</p>	33 working days	28 working days	33 working days
	Days to close performance is a concern requiring close monitoring.		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p><b>Outcome of complaints – upheld rate similar (slight increase)</b></p> <p>In 2022/23 15% of complaints were upheld compared to 14% in 2021/22 but there were more complaints in total so numbers have increased. This is a difficult performance measure because low levels of upheld cases may suggest a reluctance to identify fault and look for learning. Too many cases upheld suggests problems in service quality or other areas of service delivery. Overall, 15% upheld cases is not too much of a concern but it should be noted that 46% of cases were partially upheld. This indicates that complaint investigations are finding areas of concern where service delivery has not been to expected standards.</p>	10%	14%	15%
	Performance has fluctuated slightly but there is an overall slight increase in upheld complaints.		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<p><b>Cases progressing beyond Stage 1 – increased</b></p> <p>Although numbers remain relatively low as a proportion of all complaints, there has been an increase in the numbers of complaints progressing beyond stage 1. It is essential that stage 2 cases are not generated due to a lack of stage 1 response. In addition, there were 11 children’s and education services cases considered by the Ombudsman in the year and 5 of the cases were upheld.</p>	7	8	13
	Numbers of complaints progressing beyond stage 1 remain small but in 2022/23 there was an increase on the previous year.		

## 5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 25 compliments in 2022/23. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

Compliment for Personal Adviser, Leaving Care Team (Children's Services) - *"Thank you so much for always being there to support and help me through my journey. I'm very grateful for everything you have done, and are doing for me."*

Compliment for Social Worker - Case Management South (Children's Services) from a fostering company – *"I have worked with loads of Social Workers over the years and if you don't mind me say your practice needs to be praised. You are one of the best! You know X and I so well and you work diligently on their behalf."*

Compliment for Stepping Stones (Children's Services) - *"[Name removed] was assigned to our family last year. As a family, we would like to express our gratitude to her. She has been a great help throughout the whole process, explaining everything when we look puzzled at some of the terminology used in meetings or discussions and making sure we were involved in all decisions being made. X speaks highly of [name removed], she knows she can talk to her without feeling judged and is always available on the phone if X is in need of any help/guidance. [Name removed] has helped us with emails, referrals and just pointing us in the right direction generally. She is reliable, approachable and nothing we have asked has been too much trouble for her. She is worth her weight in gold and we feel that we wouldn't be where we are today as a family without her involvement."*

Compliment for Case Management North East Team (Children's Services) - *"I commend the social worker and the guardian for their assistance in this case. This is a prime example of a care case ably assisted by the professionals who have worked for the benefit of X and enabled proceedings to conclude within 26 weeks... In cases where there has been excellent involvement Judges should indicate that this is the case and I do so here. X and parents are lucky to have had the benefit of this social worker and this Children's Guardian."*

Compliment for SEND Team - *"Thank you for your phone call this morning to say that the draft of X's EHCP is done and things are progressing. It's great news, as to be honest, we are really struggling with him a lot of the time. But I just wanted to acknowledge you and say thank you, as we do appreciate the efforts that have been made to get the draft done."*

Compliment for Senior Social Worker, Special Guardianship Support (Children's Services) - *"The ongoing support I have received from my allocated SGO social worker since being awarded the SGO has been invaluable for which I will be eternally grateful for."*

Compliment for Schools Finance Team from a Head Teacher - *"Thank you for all the support you offered me over my time in the role. I always felt reassured that I could call on your expertise any time and you were always so calm, reassuring and professional. I enjoyed working with you."*

Compliment for Children's Occupational Therapist - Occupational Therapy Team - *"Thank you so much for all your help. Not only with this but the immense support you've provided to [name removed]. You've been a life saver and we all really appreciate the help you've given."*



## 6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 170 complaints and carried out 180 complaints investigations during 2022/23. Some example complaints have been included to illustrate the way complaints are received and the nature of the issues raised. All complaints have been anonymised and personal details removed. In some cases, wording may have been changed very slightly to ensure anonymity (with steps taken not to alter the point being made within the complaint). Please note that sometimes complaints arise due to a lack of understanding and not all of the examples below will have been upheld after investigation.

The customer has commented that they have been trying to contact their children's social worker for three months. They have not been able to make contact and when they call, they describe that they are told that the social worker is in meetings. He feels he is "being fobbed off" and that "no one is contacting him about his children". He states that when he spoke to a team administrator and asked for the managers name, that the administrator refused to give him the managers full name. He stated this is illegal. He would like this to be investigated as a complaint and someone to get in touch and discuss his concerns around communication and contact.

*"I was horrified to find out that my identity was revealed in a court report after I expressed stated I wanted to remain anonymous. This is clearly a breach of my personal data and confidentiality. While there is the breach, I am also now concerned about travelling to Shropshire to see my family as a result about this breach. Please could someone advise how I can progress this complaint."*

A complaint has been received in relation to the perceived failure of Shropshire Local Authority to provide the customer's daughter with an appropriate alternative education based on health needs. The customer reports that this has resulted in a lack of educational provision. The customer describes that medical reasons have not been taken into account for their daughter's absences even though she is supported by medical professionals.

The customer has made contact to make a complaint. She feels she is being treated unfairly by her social worker and comments that she fears that there are multiple occasions that lead her to think that the social worker "doesn't in fact have the best interest of the children in mind".

The customer is a parent who would like to complain. She feels that Shropshire Council has "refused to assess her son [name removed] for an Educational Health and Care Plan". The customer would like the complaint to be investigated and an assessment to take place.

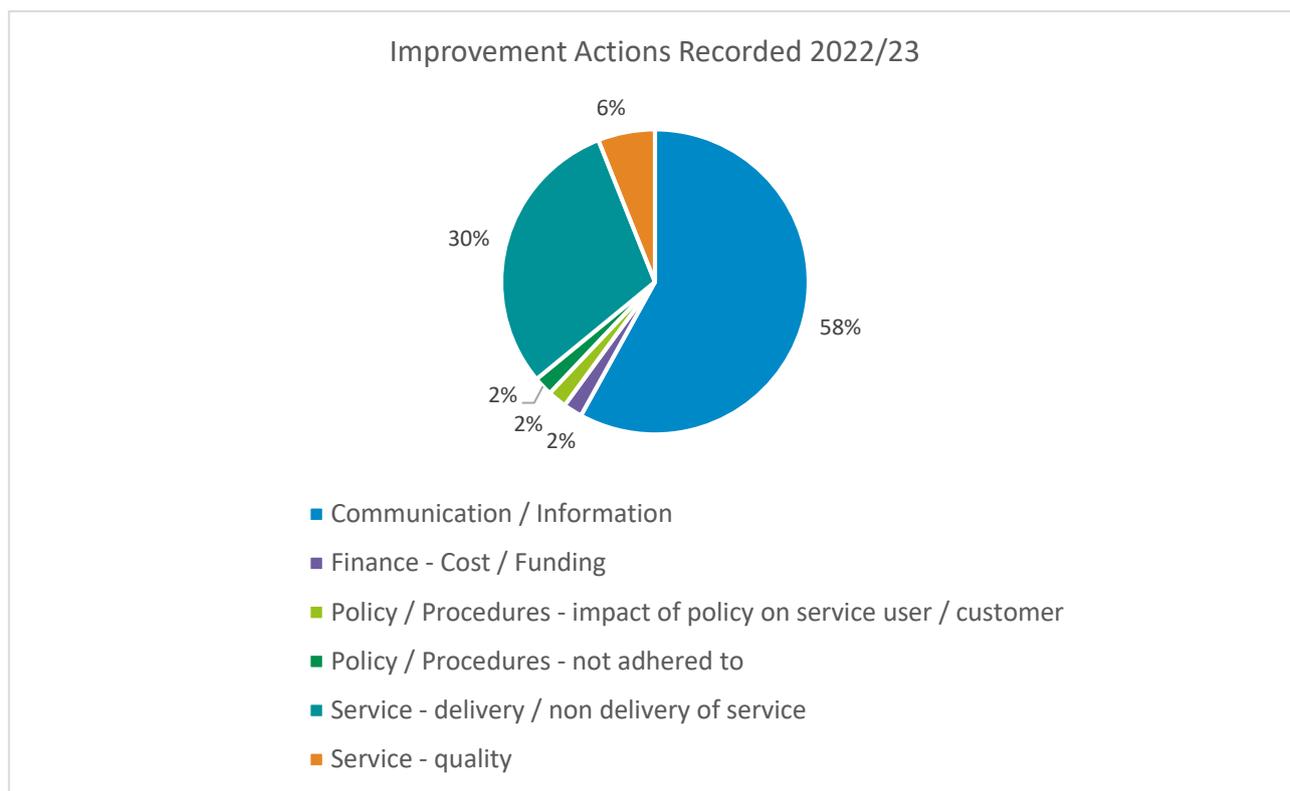
The complaint is in respect of a reported lack of response from Children's Services. The customer states that she as a mother and her children have rights which are being disregarded. She would like to provide guidance and direction as they grow, be allowed to access to their school and health records, to enable her to be involved in decision making. She feels that "Children's Services' lack of action and proper investigation has resulted in failures" and "they have not exercised a duty of care towards safeguarding the children".



## 7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Children's Services recorded learning and/or actions against 50 cases (54%) of closed cases that were upheld or partially upheld in 2022/23. Learning and actions should be recorded when a case is upheld or partially upheld and some fault can be found. For many cases not upheld there will not be any learning or actions to implement. This is included in the recommendations for 2022/23.

Of the learning points recorded in the year, 58% related to learning concerning communication and/or information provided and 30% were linked to the delivery or non-delivery of a service (e.g. delays). 3% related to findings about service quality.



Very few complaints cases required follow up learning points. Of those where actions were needed an apology was the most commonly recorded action followed by change, review or provide a service.

Complaints performance monitoring considers the main problem experienced, but this does not do justice to the complexity of issues that can be raised within a complaint and investigated. Reading complaints in detail highlights that although a complaint may relate to a specific service or concern about lack of a service, there may be other issues such as lack of communication, the way someone felt or perception of someone's attitude towards them.

## 8. Example Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Children's Services maintains a focus on complaints reporting and each quarter customer feedback data is provided to assist with learning and a focus on improvement. There are some examples of learning below. These examples may appear out of context because they are not provided with the original complaint, but they do highlight how the Shropshire Council responds to complaints without sharing confidential information. These examples are mainly from upheld and partly upheld cases. Complaints that were not upheld may occasionally include some learning within notes on the case and often this can relate to misunderstandings of how the Council has delivered a service or what to expect from a service.

The complaint investigation found that the Education, Health and Care Plan needed to be reviewed and updated. The investigation found that there had been a delay and an apology was issued to the complainant. A proposed plan with amendments has been shared and progress is being achieved.

The complaint resulted in recognition that the Speech and Language therapy intervention that was in place should have continued to be commissioned by the local authority. An apology was provided that this was not arranged, and action taken to remedy the situation.

The complaint investigator found that the wording within the assessment referred to in the complaint was not to the standard that would be expected. It was agreed that it should be changed to be clearer. The complaint allowed for some clarification to take place.

The complaint investigation found that the local authority took longer than it should have done to process the paperwork following the Annual Review. An apology for this delay was made and an element of the complaint was upheld relating to the delay.

The complaint investigator found that communication from the worker named in the complaint had not been to the standard Shropshire Council would expect. However, the findings did highlight that there were extenuating circumstances as to why her contact was not as frequent as it should have been. An apology was made, and learning taken from the complaint.

The complaint investigation highlighted that the complainant was upset following communication from the senior social worker who spoke to them. The social worker did not intend to cause offence and apologises for this. It is her role to advise parents that they hold parental responsibility and have a duty to safeguard the children. The complaint was due to the way messages were delivered but there was no fault in the actions taken. Some learning was taken from the complaint and how messages are received.

The complaint found that there was some learning related to communication and involvement. There was a recognition that the father should have been more involved within the assessment process. The complaint response and findings have been issued and action taken to address the concerns raised.

## 9. Progress Update

The table below summarises progress achieved against the recommendations made in the last annual report.

	Action	Progress Made
1	Remind staff members about the importance of reporting compliments	To fully understand customer feedback, it is important to record comments and compliments in addition to complaints. A reduction in compliments suggested that there may be some under-reporting but communication work through the year has resulted in regular cases being submitted and recorded. Compliment reporting demonstrates many members of staff going above and beyond to provide quality services to children, families and other stakeholders.
2	Focus on improving performance for days to close.	The number of days to investigate and close a complaint is one of the most important performance measures to achieve customer satisfaction and ensure an effective complaints process. Despite work through the year this remains a concern. Too many stage 1 cases have been overdue, and a few have led to premature stage 2 investigations. Weekly/fortnightly and quarterly reporting has been used through the year, but service pressures have made this a difficult issue to address. As a result, this issue is now being addressed with support from the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.
3	Make use of the complaint escalations process.	In addition to quarterly reporting, weekly complaints reports are used to show complaint due dates, any overdue responses, allocations and escalation. Managers have visibility of all cases due and are contacted when complaints reminders have not resulted in a response. It is important to recognise when staff are finding it hard to prioritise complaints over other work and ensure they have the opportunity to identify the cause of delays and provide appropriate support.
4	Address quality within some complaint responses.	Linked to the point above service pressures have negatively impacted the quality of complaint investigations and responses. In some instances, time pressures have led to less comprehensive investigations and responses and this is a concern highlighted nationally by the Local Government and Social care Ombudsman. Although Shropshire is not alone in the pressures faced, it is important to work to address quality concerns when they arise. Support is provided by the Feedback and Insight Team including one to one support, templates, good practice examples, and checks/suggestions.
5	Maximise use of complaint learning	Learning and actions are recorded where identified and additional reports offered where learning is not already regularly recorded (as it is on some service focus reports for Children's Services). Communication remains a main theme within learning, with many investigations identifying that improved communication and information sharing with customers may have helped to avoid concerns.
6	Provide additional support for SEND complaints	The Feedback and Insight Team has been working particularly closely with the SEND team where complaint numbers are higher. This is a national issue and not something unique to Shropshire. A slightly different support offer is provided, and monthly reports used to track progress and maintain a focus on timely and robust responses.
7	Work to address unreasonably persistent or vexatious behaviour	The Council's procedure for unreasonably persistent or vexatious customers has been updated with additional resources and support provided by the team and available on the council's intranet. Staff members dealing with particularly challenging cases need to know support is available and a range of options can be implemented.

## 10. Actions and Recommendations

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Complaints performance for Shropshire Council's Children's Services has been negatively impacted by service pressures and rising community and service user needs. Although overall numbers of complaints remain small compared to other local authorities (local research has been undertaken to provide some benchmarking information), there is a need to recognise performance issues and seek to respond where possible or take action to prevent any further negative change. Recommendations for 2022/23 are:

1. Days to close complaints performance must remain a priority in 2022/23. There has been some overall improvement across the wider council but that is not yet evident for children's services (with much shorter timeframes for children's statutory complaints). If timescales are missed for statutory stage 1 complaints, complainants may request escalation to stage 2. This increases costs for the organisation. Work has been planned with Children's Services managers (complaint investigators) to communicate expectations and the impact of missed deadlines.
2. Quality of complaint investigations and responses must remain a focus for the coming year. Support will continue to be offered by the Feedback and Insight Team on a case by case basis, and through the provision of templates and other guidance, but it is also recommended that training and guidance is developed within Children's Services to communicate expectations of internal complaint investigators.
3. In the 2022/23 annual letter to Shropshire Council, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman writes "*complaints offer organisations a rich source of intelligence and insight that has the potential to be transformational*". An ongoing recommendation is to maintain a focus on complaint learning and the recording of all learning and actions. The SEND Team demonstrate good practice in their recording and consideration of learning and this approach is recommended for other teams. A team approach to reviewing learning and actions from complaints can assist with service improvement and embed a culture of reflection and learning.
4. The top complaint theme for Children's Services in 2022/23 relates to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Linked to that issue there are references to the provision of speech and language therapy support and the annual review process. The complaints do not highlight concerns about service quality but delay and timeliness of communication and response. The complaints suggest a lack of capacity within the service to meet demand rather than any fault in service delivery itself (particularly evident in the first half of the year). Where confusion/misunderstanding has been identified through complaint investigations, clear actions have been taken to prevent other parents facing similar situations. Changes to template letters, information within communications, and provision of named contact officers are just some examples of ongoing improvement. This focus on learning will continue over the next 12 months and it is hoped a positive impact will be seen in the data for the next annual report.
5. The number of repeat complainants is a particular issue for Children's Services not seen in the same way within other service areas. These customers are less commonly unreasonable or vexatious in their behaviour but may raise regular complaints over many years. This may not be an issue that is easy to address, but it is suggested that this is reported and considered to see if there is any more in-depth, remedial action that can be taken to increase customer satisfaction and reduce long-term complainant behaviour.

Feedback and Insight Team,  
Communications and Engagement, Resources  
Shropshire Council

Email: [CustomerFeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:CustomerFeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)



Shropshire  
Council